

# Bulletin 2026-13

March 31, 2026

## ***Directive 035 Rescission***

In consultation with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA), the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) has rescinded *Directive 035: Baseline Water Well Testing Requirement for Coalbed Methane Wells Completed Above the Base of Groundwater Protection*.

*Directive 035* was released in 2006 during a period of rapid growth in coalbed methane (CBM) development to provide a consistent, science-based approach to baseline water-well testing near shallow CBM operations. Since its introduction, industry has submitted more than 16 000 baseline test logs, and we have not confirmed any case of risk to public safety, environmental protection, or resource conservation that would require the directive to remain in force. The data shows no systemic effects on groundwater quality related to CBM activity. In addition, CBM licensing has also declined sharply—from 2420 licences in 2006 to 214 in 2014—and only 34 licences have been issued since 2015, with none issued in nine of those years.

Based on the evidence and the shift in industry activity, the regulatory framework is being updated to reflect actual risk while maintaining strong groundwater protections:

- AEPA has changed its technical standard for [baseline water-well-testing](#) from a mandatory requirement to a best management practice.
- The AER has rescinded *Directive 035* to align with AEPA.

We have also revised *Directive 056*, *Directive 065*, and *Manual 012* to maintain alignment across the regulatory framework.

Rescinding *Directive 035* does not reduce our expectations for safe and responsible operations or our regulatory oversight. Groundwater protection is built into our broader regulatory system. We will continue to monitor regulatory compliance, respond to concerns, and take appropriate action where warranted.

Landowners should continue to report any concerns or complaints to the Energy and Environmental Emergency 24-Hour Response Line at 1-800-222-6514. We will follow up on all reports through our investigation and response process as outlined on our [emergency response](#) webpage.

We support the ongoing collection and submission of baseline water quantity and quality data before drilling by CBM operators using the [Alberta Water Well Web Application](#). Landowners may also request companies perform baseline water-well testing. Doing so supports transparency, helps prevent or resolve disputes, and provides clear evidence of groundwater conditions before development.

For more information, see our resource development webpage on [CBM](#).

If you have any questions, contact our Customer Contact Centre by phone at 1-855-297-8311 or [inquiries@aer.ca](mailto:inquiries@aer.ca).